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Desert Locusts

- Desert Locusts normally live and breed in semi-arid/desert regions.
- Locusts aren't dangerous as long as they are individual hoppers/moths or small isolated groups of insects, in what is called the "solitary phase".
- It is when their population grows to large numbers the resultant crowding induces behavioral changes and transformation from the "solitary" to "gregarious" phase that they start forming swarms.
- A single swarm contains up to 40-80 million adults in one square km and these can travel up to 150 km in one day.
- The above large-scale breeding and swarm formation, however, takes place only when conditions turn very favorable in their natural habitat, i.e. desert and semi-arid regions.
- For laying eggs, they require bare ground, which is rarely found in areas with dense vegetation.
- So, in India they are more likely to breed in Rajasthan than in the Indo-Gangetic plains or Godavari and Cauvery delta.
- The Union Agriculture Ministry's Locust Warning Organisation then observed "low-density I & II instar gregarious/transient hoppers" at Jaisalmer and Suratgarh in Rajasthan and Fazilka in Punjab adjoining the Indo-Pakistan border.
- Subsequently, there has been arrival of swarms from the main spring-breeding areas.
- And these swarms have come not only to western Rajasthan, but also moved to the eastern parts of the state and even Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.
- Much of this movement, it seems, was aided by the strong westerly winds from Cyclone Amphan in the Bay of Bengal.

Role 0f wind in Locusts Spread in India

- The main locust breeding areas in the Horn of Africa, Yemen, Oman, Southern Iran and Pakistan's Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces recorded widespread rains in March-April.
- East Africa, in fact, had its wettest rainfall season in over four decades even during October-November.

- Winds are the major carrier of desert locusts that are currently devastating crops and green areas in India's northwest and central regions.
- The winds that enter India to the north of the Western Ghats split into north-westerlies continuing towards central and northeastern India in one branch and towards the southeast in another branch.
- This split is caused by a relative higher pressure ridge extending from Andhra and Tamil Nadu to Gujarat.
- So, the winds are going to the north and south of this pressure ridge, the locusts must have taken the southern branch of this split.
- These winds are taking the locusts more towards Madhya Pradesh, that lies south east of Rajasthan, rather than Uttar Pradesh or Bihar that are further east.
- The surface pressure contours or isobars tend to align from southeast to northwest so winds follow those contours once they enter India north of the Western Ghats.
- That is due to the large-scale contrast of land-ocean heating that is getting ready for the monsoon.
- But it is very difficult to pin down exact localized wind patterns over India because of a lack of data.
- Apart from general wind patterns, localized winds are crucial in understanding where the locust swarms will move next.
- There are two other reasons apart from wind for their spread to areas that have not been affected by locusts in a long time, they are

1. Early arrival that was facilitated by favorable conditions in Iran, Pakistan and the western border areas of India.
2. Excessive rainfall in the affected regions that helped them sustain and multiply.

Isobars

- Isobars are lines on a weather map joining together places of equal atmospheric pressure.

- On the map the isobar marked 1004 represents an area of high pressure, while the isobar marked 976 represents an area of low pressure.
- The numbers measure the atmospheric pressure in millibars.
- Usually isobars are drawn at intervals of two or four millibars (one thousandth of a bar).
- The closer the isobars are together, the windier it is.
- If the lowest number is in the middle circle, this is a low pressure or

depression, often low pressures mean wet and windy weather.
- If the highest number is in the middle circle, this is a high pressure or anticyclone, often high pressures mean dry, sunny weather.
- Air pressure tends to range from 890 mb (a hurricane) to 1060 mb (an anticyclone).

Delimitation

- Delimitation literally means the act or process of fixing limits or boundaries of territorial constituencies in a country to represent changes in population.
- Delimitation provide equal representation to equal segments of a population.
- Fair division of geographical areas so that one political party doesn't have an advantage over others in an election.
- It aims to follow the principle of "One Vote One Value".

Delimitation Commission

- The Delimitation Commission is appointed by the President of India and works in collaboration with the Election Commission of India.
- Composition:

1. Retired Supreme Court judge
2. Chief Election Commissioner
3. Respective State Election Commissioners

- **Functions includes**

1. To determine the number and boundaries of constituencies to make population of all constituencies nearly equal.
2. To identify seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, wherever their population is relatively large.

- In case of difference of opinion among members of the Commission, the opinion of the majority prevails.
- The Delimitation Commission in India is a high power body whose orders have the force of law and cannot be called in question before any court.

Current Position of Delimitation

- The first delimitation exercise was carried out by the President (with the help of the Election Commission) in 1950-51.
- The Delimitation Commission Act was enacted in 1952.
- Delimitation Commissions have been set up four times — 1952, 1963, 1973 and 2002 under the Acts of 1952, 1962, 1972 and 2002.
- There was no delimitation after the 1981 and 1991 Censuses.

- In 2008, Delimitation was done based on the 2001 census, but the total number of seats in the Assemblies and Parliament decided as per the 1971 Census was not changed.
- The constitution has also capped the number of Lok Shaba & Rajya Sabha seats to a maximum of 550 & 250 respectively and increasing populations are being represented by a single representative.
- In the 2009 General elections, 499 out of total 543 Parliamentary constituencies were newly delimited constituencies.
- This affected the National Capital Region of Delhi, The Union territory of Puducherry and all other states except J&K, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Jharkhand, Manipur and Nagaland.
- States that take little interest in population control could end up with a greater number of seats in Parliament.
- The southern states that promoted family planning faced the possibility of having their seats reduced.

Delimitation under Indian constitution

- Under Article 82, the Parliament enacts a Delimitation Act after every Census.
- Under Article 170, States also get divided into territorial constituencies as per Delimitation Act after every Census.
- Once the Act is in force, the Union government sets up a Delimitation Commission.

Financial Development Council

- The Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC) is a **non-statutory apex council** under the Ministry of Finance constituted by the Executive Order in 2010.
- **The Raghuram Rajan committee (2008)** on financial sector reforms first proposed the creation of FSDC.
- It is chaired by the Finance Minister and its members include the heads of all Financial Sector Regulators (RBI, SEBI, PFRDA & IRDA), Finance Secretary, Secretary of Department of Economic Affairs (DEA), Secretary of Department of Financial Services (DFS), and Chief Economic Adviser.
- In 2018, the government reconstituted FSDC to include the

1. Minister of State responsible for the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA),
2. Secretary of Department of Electronics and Information Technology,
3. Chairperson of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI).
4. Revenue Secretary.

- FSDC sub-committee is headed by the Governor of RBI, The Council can

invite experts to its meeting if required.

- The objective of FSDC is to strengthen and institutionalize the mechanism for maintaining financial stability, enhancing inter-regulatory coordination and promoting financial sector development.
- It also intends to monitor macro-prudential supervision of the economy.
- It will assess the functioning of the large financial conglomerates.
- Recently, the 22nd meeting of the Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC) chaired by the Finance Minister was held through a video conference.
- The meeting reviewed issues relating to market volatility, domestic resource mobilization and capital flows in the country in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic and the nation-wide lockdown imposed to contain it.

Asian Development Bank

- ADB is a regional development bank established on 19th December 1966.
- ADB now has 68 members, 49 from within Asia.
- Japan holds the largest proportion of shares in ADB followed by the USA.
- It aims to promote social and economic development in Asia and the Pacific.
- ADB is committed to achieving a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific, while sustaining its efforts to eradicate extreme poverty.
- ADB is headquartered in Manila, Philippines.
- Recently, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Government of India have signed a $177 million loan to upgrade state highways and major district roads in the state of Maharashtra.
- The project will upgrade 2 major district roads and 11 state highways, with a combined length of 450 km.

Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat programme

- “Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat” was announced on 31st October, 2015 on the occasion of the 140th birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.
- Subsequently, the initiative was announced in Budget Speech for 2016-17.
- Through this innovative measure, the knowledge of the culture, traditions and practices of different States & UTs will lead to an enhanced understanding and bonding between the States, thereby strengthening the unity and integrity of India.
- All States and UTs will be covered under the programme, there will be pairing of States/UTs at national level and these pairings will be in effect for one year, or till the next round of pairings.
- The State/UT level pairings would be utilized for state level activities.
- District level pairings would be independent of the State level pairings.

- The activity will be very useful to link various States and Districts in annual programmes that will connect people through exchanges in areas of culture, tourism, language, education trade etc. and citizens will be able to experience the cultural diversity of a much larger number of States/UTs while realising that India is one.

- Recently it has been decided to take forward the Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat programme of the Government by using innovative ways in view of the prevailing conditions of COVID 19.
- Some of the recent initiatives includes
- **Dekho Apna Desh** – Under this banner Institutions under Tourism ministry are organizing webinars on various aspects of tourism, hosted on MyGov portal.
- **E- Heritagepedia and E- Artist pedia -** Culture Ministry proposes to develop E- Heritagepedia and E- Artist pedia , so that renowned artists can do virtual programme modules to teach their art.

UN Peace Keepers

- Peacekeeping by the United Nations is a role held by the Department of Peace Operations as "a unique and dynamic instrument developed by the organization as a way to help countries torn by conflict to create the conditions for lasting peace".
- It is distinguished from peacebuilding, peacemaking, and peace enforcement although the United Nations does acknowledge that all activities are "mutually reinforcing" and that overlap between them is frequent in practice.
- Peacekeepers monitor and observe peace processes in post-conflict areas and assist ex-combatants in implementing the peace agreements they may have signed.
- Accordingly, UN peacekeepers (often referred to as Blue Berets or Blue Helmets because of their light blue berets or helmets) can include soldiers, police officers, and civilian personnel.
- The United Nations Charter gives the United Nations Security Council the power and responsibility to take collective action to maintain international peace and security.
- For this reason, the international community usually looks to the Security Council to authorize peacekeeping operations.
- In cases where direct UN involvement is not considered appropriate or feasible, the Council authorizes regional organizations such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Economic Community of West African States, or coalitions of willing countries to undertake peacekeeping or peace-enforcement tasks.

Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award

- United Nations “Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award” was created in 2016.
- It recognizes the dedication and effort of an individual military peacekeeper in promoting the principles of UN Security Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in a peace operation context.
- Recently women peacekeepers from India and Brazil have jointly won the United Nations Military Gender Advocate of the Year 2019 Award.
- Major Suman Gawani of the Indian Army, a Military Observer formerly deployed with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan and Commander Carla Monteiro de Castro Araujo, a Brazilian Naval officer have been chosen for the award.
- Major Gawani is deployed in UNMISS, she mentored over 230 UN Military Observers on conflict-related sexual violence and ensured the presence of women military observers in each of the Mission’s team sites.
- They will receive the award during an online ceremony presided over by UN Secretary-General, marking the International Day of UN Peacekeepers.
- For the first time, two peacekeepers will receive the award jointly for their contribution to this important cause.

United Nations Mission in South Sudan

- The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) is the newest United Nations peacekeeping mission for the recently independent South Sudan, which became independent on 9 July 2011.
- UNMISS was established in 2011 under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1996.
- It is composed of 15,000 military personnel, 1,800 police, and 2,800 civilian workers.
- It is headquartered in the South Sudanese capital of Juba.

Source: PIB, the Hindu, Down to Earth

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